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2013



# The Civilian Conservation Corps

Coronado National Forest  
1933-1942

Southwestern  
Region

RG-R3-05-05





*Civilian Conservation Corps emblem, courtesy of the National Association of CCC Alumni*

*Front Cover: Work crew from the Tanque Verde CCC  
Camp at Rincon Dam  
Photograph courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society*

# The Civilian Conservation Corps

The United States was in the middle of the Great Depression when Franklin D. Roosevelt became President in March 1933. Much of the nation was unemployed and economic chaos plagued the country. Roosevelt reacted swiftly. Within days he persuaded Congress to legislate and fund a series of Federal programs to alleviate the massive unemployment.

Best known of these programs was the Civilian Conservation Corps, a program to recruit unemployed young men, enroll them in a peacetime army, and send them into battle against destruction and erosion of the nation's natural resources. Roosevelt's goals were clearly stated: "Conservation of our natural resources and conservation of our human resources. Both are sound investments for the future."

The first enrollees were inducted into the CCC in early April 1933, only a month after Roosevelt took office. By July of that year, over 250,000 young men were stationed in 1,300 CCC camps around the country.

Unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 25 could enroll in the CCC for 6-month periods. In exchange for hard work, they received food, shelter, clothing, educational instruction, and \$30 per month, \$25 of which was sent home to their families. Enrollees were organized into companies and the companies in turn assigned to camps. Camps were designed to hold about 200 enrollees.

The U.S. Army organized the CCC enrollees and had charge of construction, administration, and medical care in the camps. The USDA Forest Service and other land managing agencies had charge of actual work projects.

The Office of Education provided educational advisers. A special category of enrollee was the Local Experienced Men (LEM). These were skilled craftsmen from local communities hired to teach CCC men from urban environments how to use tools for natural resources management.

Six camps opened on Coronado National Forest during the first enrollment period, May 1 to October 31, 1933 (two of these camps were on land that was then part of Crook National Forest). Water



availability was an important factor in selecting camp locations in southern Arizona. Most Coronado camps were used mainly in winter, with companies traveling to northern Arizona or other cool climates for the summer. In the Pinaleno Mountains, Columbine Camp (F-74-A), at an elevation of more than 9,000 feet, alternated with Noon Creek Camp (F-41-A) near the base of the mountain as summer and winter locations respectively.

CCC camps on Coronado National Forest contained similar structures. Typically, each camp consisted of four wood frame barracks housing 50 men each, quarters for Army and Forest Service personnel, a mess hall, kitchen, headquarters building, infirmary, latrines, garage, and tool and supply houses. Some of these buildings were portable and, occasionally, canvas tents instead of wood frame buildings were used. "Side" or "fly" camps with tent facilities were established for enrollees working on projects located in remote areas.

Life in a CCC camp was rigorous. The rising bell rang at 6 a.m. Enrollees worked 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Projects included constructing roads and trails, building stock tanks and cattle guards, erecting fences and telephone lines, building campgrounds and picnic areas, conducting revegetation and erosion control projects, planting trees, and building Forest Service administrative sites. Enrollees also participated in fire-fighting efforts, including erecting and staffing lookouts.

Educational and recreational activities were provided. Many young men learned to read and write or received additional schooling from CCC educational programs. One building in each camp was a combined dayroom, recreation center, and canteen where men could gather in the evenings to play games, talk, or peruse the newspapers and magazines. On weekends, trucks were often available to take enrollees to town. Or dances would be held at a camp and women from nearby communities invited to attend. Baseball teams were organized and camp teams competed against one another.

Fifteen CCC camps were located on Coronado National Forest between 1933 and 1942 (those in the Pinaleno Mountains were then part of Crook National Forest). Some were occupied for only one or two enrollment periods while others operated for most of the 9 years of the CCC's existence. A brief look at these camps follows.

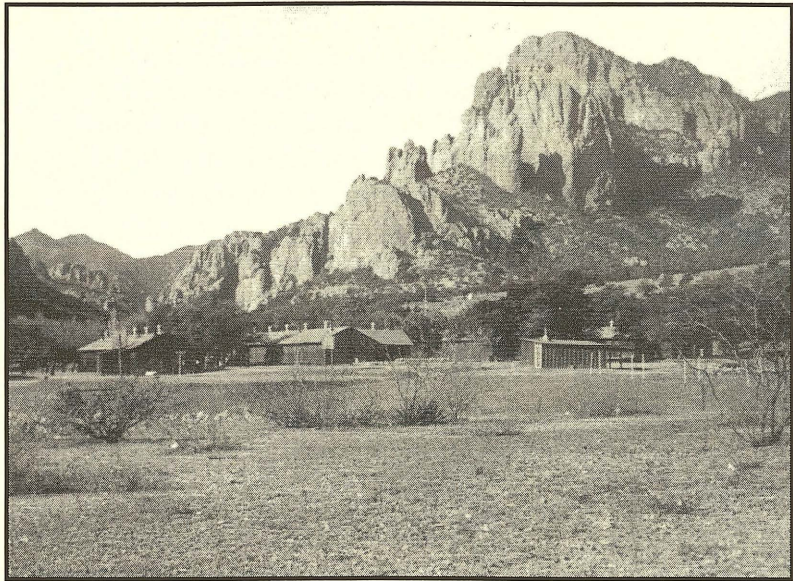


# Chiricahua Mountains

## Cave Creek (F-10-A)

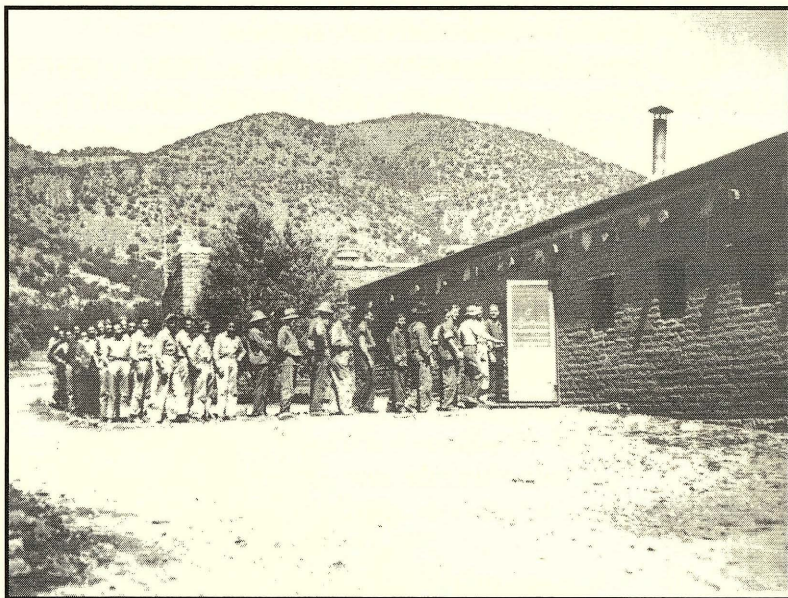
Cave Creek Camp was occupied almost continuously from June 1933 until the CCC was disbanded in the spring of 1942. During part of this time, the camp was run by the Soil Conservation Service. Located on the east side of the Chiricahua Mountains near the town of Portal, most of the buildings were of frame construction, although several were adobe. The only building still in existence is a stone garage which was subsequently converted into living quarters for Forest Service personnel.

Major accomplishments of the camp were construction of the nearby Portal Ranger Station office and associated outbuildings, construction of Rustler Park Fire Guard Station, and completion of South Fork Campground. Enrollees also built many miles of mountain road, fenced rangeland, strung telephone lines, and installed waterlines. During hunting season, enrollees staffed a check station at the camp.



*Cave Creek CCC Camp  
Photograph courtesy of Lloyd Harris*

The camp was in a remote location and at times morale was low. During the first enrollment period, an enrollee was killed in a blasting accident. The camp's formal name honored him — Camp Harold C. Riley. Near the end of the camp's occupation a culvert cave-in killed three enrollees. In spite of these tragedies, the camp completed much important work.



*Rucker Canyon CCC Camp - Mess Line  
USDA Forest Service photo*

### **Rucker Canyon (F-12-A)**

Rucker Canyon Camp lay on a hillside on the west side of the Chiricahua Mountains. It was occupied sporadically from the summer of 1933 until the spring of 1941, sometimes as a veterans' camp. The men lived in tents for several months until permanent buildings were constructed.

Eventually there was a spacious adobe mess hall as well as other frame and adobe buildings. Because of its hillside location, camp buildings were widely separated and connected by walkways. The only CCC camp building remaining in the canyon was the barber shop, which has been moved to the Rucker Ranger Station.

Enrollees constructed recreation facilities at Rustler Park, Rucker Park, Cypress Park, Bathtub Park, and Hermitage Park. They opened 9 miles of new road in Rucker Canyon to increase recreational use and helped with fire protection. Numerous range improvements included spring developments, fences, and stock tanks.

In 1937 the wells at the camp ran dry. Water was hauled from 6 miles away until new wells were dug. Minor health problems plagued the enrollees for a period of time, but for the most part, the camp ran smoothly. The CCC produced many lasting improvements in the Chiricahua Mountains.

### **Turkey Creek (F-47-A)**

Turkey Creek CCC Camp was located in a wooded area in Turkey Creek Canyon on the west side of the Chiricahua Mountains. It was first occupied in late summer of 1935 and was used off and on until the spring of 1937. Most of the buildings were portable.

In spite of its short duration, this camp was responsible for an impressive list of projects. Enrollees stationed at a side camp built Cima Park Fire Guard Station high in what is now the Chiricahua Wilderness. They also built campgrounds at Rustler Park and Fly Peak, and may have been responsible for building Fly Peak Fire Lookout.

### **Bonita Canyon (NM-2)**

Bonita Canyon CCC Camp was located in Silver Spur Meadow in Chiricahua National Monument. It was administered by the National Park Service, but camp enrollees worked extensively on Forest Service projects in the northern Chiricahua Mountains. The camp opened the summer of 1934 and was occupied through the summer of 1939.



# **Pinaleño Mountains (Mt. Graham)**

## **Tripp Canyon (F-15-A)**

Tripp Canyon CCC Camp opened in July 1933 as a veterans' camp. It was located at the north end of the Pinaleños, west of the small town of Pima. Little is known of the activities of this camp. It was occupied for about a year and then used as a side camp by other CCC camps.

## **Treasure Park (F-14-A)**

Opened on May 23, 1933, Treasure Park CCC Camp was the first camp established in Arizona. Located at the end of Swift Trail, the auto road into the Pinaleños' high country, it was open only for two summers (1933 and 1934). During the summer of 1934, Treasure Park Camp was replaced by the Columbine CCC camp.

Enrollees at the camp were mainly from Texas and many got their first glimpse of snow upon arrival at Treasure Park. Locals told them it was "Arizona Ice Cream." Treasure Park enrollees built fire lookout towers on Heliograph Peak, West Peak, and possibly Webb Peak. There were few roads at the time, so equipment and materials had to be packed in by mules.

## **Columbine (F-74-A)**

Established high in the Pinaleño Mountains, Columbine CCC Camp was just west of the present Columbine Ranger Station. It opened the summer of 1934 when Treasure Park Camp closed. Although the original CCC company (F-74-A) was only in residence at Columbine until November of 1934, other companies occupied the camp during summer periods for a number of years. It was primarily a tent camp. One of the camp's major projects was the continuation of Swift Trail from Hospital Flat to Riggs Lake.

## **Noon Creek (F-41-A)**

Noon Creek CCC Camp lay at the eastern base of Mt. Graham below Angle Apple Orchard. It was occupied during winter months beginning in 1933. All buildings were frame construction. The barracks were situated on the opposite side of a small wash and were reached by a footbridge.

During World War II, Noon Creek served as a prisoner-of-war camp. It is now a Forest Service storage and maintenance area and the only structures remaining are the barn and corral.

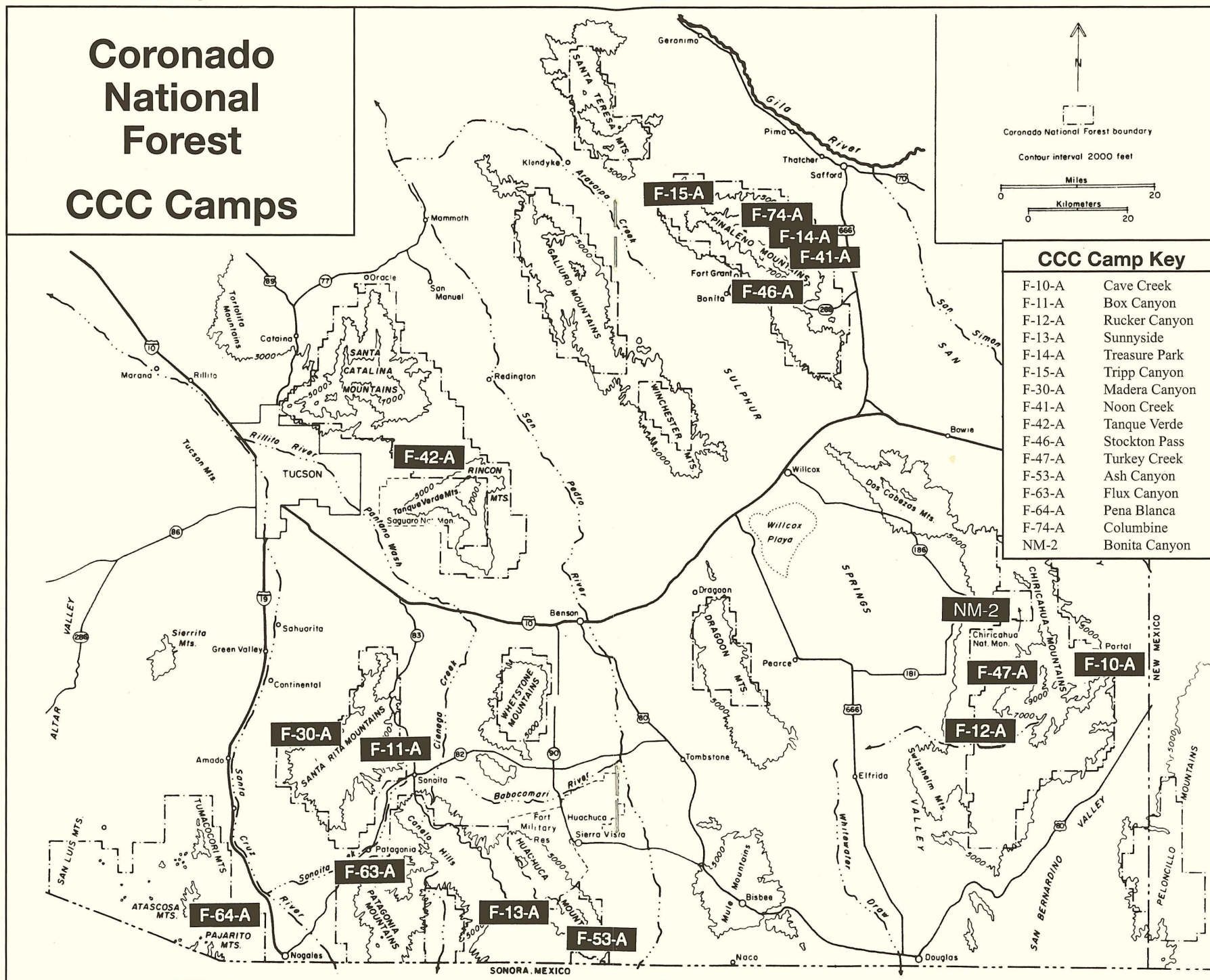
Few records remain regarding the camp's projects. One former enrollee remembers building erosion control dams and fences, and widening and repairing Swift Trail.

### **Stockton Pass (F-46-A)**

This CCC camp was located at Stockton Pass in the southern part of the Pinaleño Mountains east of the town of Bonita. Little is known about the camp or its projects. A former enrollee remembers reconstruction work on Stockton Pass Road (State Highway 266), building fences in the southern part of the Pinaleños, and constructing trails up the mountain. Enrollees at Columbine Camp finished the upper portion of these trails.

# Coronado National Forest

## CCC Camps





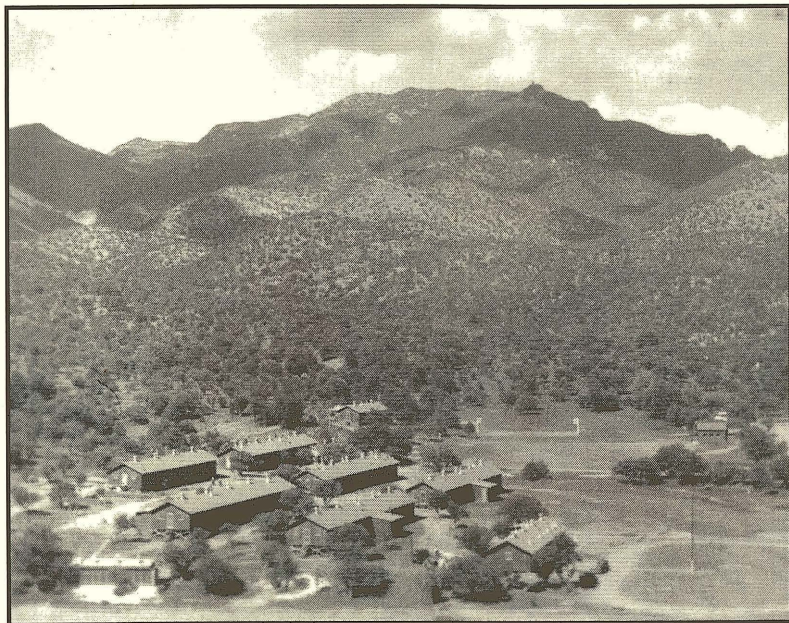
# Huachuca Mountains

## Sunnyside (F-13-A)

Sunnyside CCC Camp, which opened June 3, 1933, was located in Parker Canyon, west of the abandoned Sunnyside community. State Highway 83, which ran south of the camp, had just been built by the Works Project Administration (WPA). Men were housed in tents for the first month until wood frame buildings were built.

The camp icehouse consisted of a hole dug between two trees and covered with canvas. A powder magazine was located about a mile north of the camp in an artificial cavern.

In the mornings, trucks gathered near the garage to load men and equipment for the day's work. The men loaded fence posts, barbed wire, cement, and equipment onto big stake-side trucks and then climbed aboard themselves to stand for the ride to the work sites.



*Sunnyside CCC Camp*

*Photograph courtesy of Arizona Historical Society*

Sunnyside CCC camp accomplished numerous projects such as building fences, cattle guards, roads, trails, and check dams. The camp was occupied for five periods before it closed on October 21, 1935. Little evidence remains of the camp today except a scattering of coal and a few rusty nails.

### **Ash Canyon (F-53-A)**

Ash Canyon CCC Camp was located about 12 miles south of Sierra Vista in the old placer gold country of the Huachuca Mountains southeastern edge. It was occupied as a CCC camp only during the second enrollment period from November 3, 1933, to April 30, 1934. The buildings were all wood frame with tarpaper covering and asphalt roofing.

When the camp was occupied, Sierra Vista was a small village called Garden Canyon or Fry's. State Highway 92, which now runs east of the CCC camp, did not exist and access to the camp was via a dirt road that went through the old McCabe Ranch just west of the camp. Water for the camp was piped from McCabe Springs across the wide arroyo that bounded the north side of the camp.

A major accomplishment of Ash Canyon CCC Camp was construction of a road through Montezuma Canyon (now part of Coronado National Memorial). Enrollees built a number of cattleguards, a bridge, a powder magazine, two stone fences, and two telephone lines. They also maintained a number of roads. In the summer of 1934, Ash Canyon was converted to a Transient Camp used by older unemployed men.

# **Santa Rita Mountains**

## **Box Canyon (F-11-A)**

Box Canyon Camp opened in June 1933 in a small meadow near the old gold mining town of Greaterville. By July, the camp had moved to Gardner Canyon north of Sonoita. Housing was in tents and it is likely that these temporary structures continued throughout the use of the camp. In November it was moved once again, becoming Flux Canyon Camp (F-63-A).

Enrollees worked on stock tanks, fences, and cattle guards in the vicinity of Gardner Canyon. Their most important project was construction of the road through Box Canyon. Five months were spent on this project. The road was then completed by Madera Canyon CCC Camp (F-30-A). Box Canyon Road officially opened on May 6, 1934, with a ceremony and official motorcade. Then in September 1935, a violent storm all but destroyed the road. Eventually it was rebuilt and continues in use today.

## **Madera Canyon (F-30-A)**

Madera Canyon CCC Camp was located on the west side of the Santa Rita Mountains near the mouth of Madera Canyon. It opened November 1, 1933, and was occupied almost continuously until May 1938, occasionally as a veterans' camp. Camp buildings were of rigid frame construction. Much of the camp burned on May 9, 1934, during its first year of operation, but was quickly rebuilt.

The camp undertook a variety of construction and maintenance activities. During the fourth enrollment period, men from Madera Canyon Camp worked in Sabino Canyon in the Santa Catalina Mountains building many of the bridges, shelters, stairways, fireplaces, and picnic tables that can be seen there today.

In May of 1935, Madera Canyon Camp finished work on Box Canyon Road crossing the northern end of the Santa Ritas. Closer to Madera Canyon, they worked on erosion-control projects, maintained roads, eradicated weed species, developed plots for wildlife protection, and worked on revegetation and fire-control projects.



Camp inspection reports indicate that morale was good and there was a strong interest in education among enrollees. Recreational activities included volleyball, croquet, and horseshoes. Trucks took the men to Tucson or other surrounding towns on weekends. The few complaints registered by enrollees involved problems with skunk infestations beneath buildings and the removal of beer from camp.

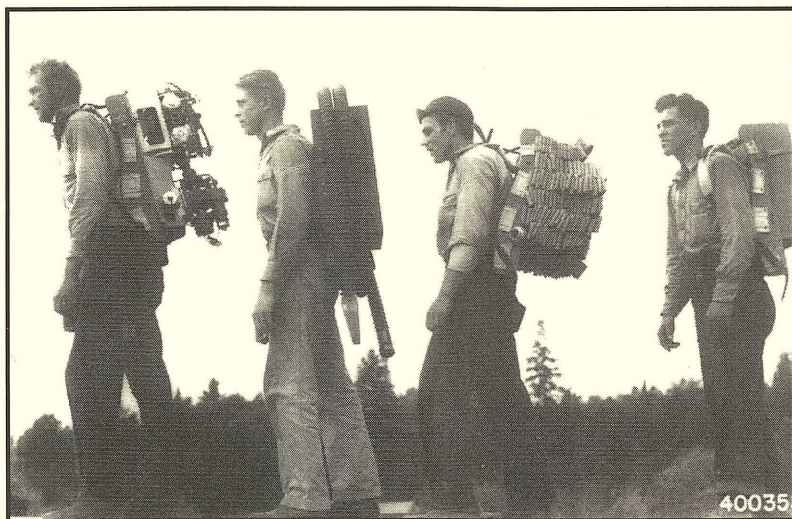
After Madera Camp closed, the facility continued to be used by the U.S. Army as a recreation area.

# Patagonia Mountains

## Flux Canyon (F-63-A)

Flux Canyon CCC Camp was located in Flux Canyon south of the town of Patagonia. It was first occupied in November 1933, by men of the Box Canyon Camp who had been forced to leave their Gardner Canyon location due to lease difficulties. The following year, Flux Canyon Camp became F-63-A. It was used only during the winters of 1934 and 1935 although 4 years later it was reoccupied by a Soil Conservation Service CCC camp. Enrollees lived in large tents with wooden floors for the first 2 or 3 months of the camp's operation. After that, wood frame barracks were built.

Former enrollees remember building fences; this may have been the primary activity of the camp. Men from a Flux Canyon side camp at Duquesne are reported to have torn down and rebuilt 6 miles of fence in 10 days. Flux Canyon Camp may have been responsible for building the Patagonia Ranger Station.



CCC Fire Crew

Photograph courtesy of Arizona Historical Society

# **Tumacacori Mountains**

## **Pena Blanca (F-64-A)**

Pena Blanca CCC Camp was located in Walker Canyon about 14 miles northwest of Nogales, Arizona. The camp opened in October 1935, and was occupied sporadically until 1941. Most of the buildings were portable or wood frame construction. Enrollment at the camp was generally less than 150 men.

Projects included construction of the Nogales Ranger Station and a storage house at the Patagonia Ranger Station. Enrollees also built dirt tanks, fire lanes, and fence lines, improved the Washington Camp road, and worked on erosion-control projects.

In the evening, elementary and high school classes were taught by technical and Army personnel, and illiterate enrollees were brought to a 4th grade reading level. The men built their own swimming pool, staged basketball and volleyball tournaments, played ping-pong, softball, and horseshoes, boxed, watched movies, and went to Nogales for weekend parties.

There were a few problems during occupation of the camp. Early in 1939, thirteen enrollees from Pennsylvania refused to work and were given dishonorable discharges. They had joined the CCC primarily to get a free ride to the West. Then in May 1941, a camp boxing match turned into a minor race riot and a random punch broke the neck of an enrollee. As a result, five men were given dishonorable discharges and eight were transferred to other CCC camps. In spite of these problems, the camp generally ran smoothly.

Concrete foundations are all that remain of Pena Blanca CCC Camp.



# Santa Catalina Mountains

## Tanque Verde (F-42-A)

Tanque Verde CCC Camp was located east of Tucson near Tanque Verde Canyon. It was first occupied in November 1933 by a CCC company from Wyoming that stayed until May of 1934. Another CCC company occupied the camp from July to November of 1934. The camp consisted of frame buildings, although the number and type of buildings is not known.

The first company at Tanque Verde Camp fenced Saguaro National Monument, built the adobe headquarters there, reconstructed part of Redington Pass Road, and built the Lowell Ranger Station in Sabino Canyon. The second company continued work on Redington Pass Road and built recreation facilities in Sabino Canyon. They also worked on projects around the Palisade Ranger Station and Soldier Camp high in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

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The CCC completed projects in most of the mountain ranges of the Coronado National Forest. Some of their accomplishments are well known and evident today. Other, less visible projects, also have been of lasting benefit to the national forest and American public.

Civilian Conservation Corps veterans are nearly unanimous in praising the program, citing its benefits in building character, instilling discipline and pride, teaching skills, and providing education. The money sent home was often badly needed. Public service projects were designed to conserve the nation's resources and develop the national forests. Many of the buildings, trails, and recreational facilities created by the CCC are still in use, but the less visible heritage—the conservation of this country's human resources—is far and away the greatest contribution.



**“Windows on the Past”**